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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000385

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PTER](#) [PHSA](#) [YM](#) [MARITIME](#) [SECURITY](#)

SUBJECT: AL-QA'IDA ESCAPE: COORDINATING MARITIME EFFORTS

REF: SANAA 272

Classified By: DCM NABEEL KHOURY, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary: On February 11, Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) Chief and NAVCENT Liaison Officer (LNO) met with Yemeni military and coast guard officials to discuss maritime cooperation to capture 23 escaped al Qa'ida prisoners (ref A). Led by the Chief of Staff for the Yemeni Armed Forces, MG Mohammad Qassimi, the meeting delineated efforts between the Yemen Navy (YNAV), Yemen Coast Guard (YCG) and Coalition forces from the Bahrain-based Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150) to block possible maritime escape routes and capture the prisoners if interdicted. Qassimi requested that the YCG and YNAV create a joint-plan indicating which maritime areas Yemeni assets could not cover, in order to help focus CTF-150 efforts. End Summary.

Who,s in Charge?

2. (C) On February 10, NAVCENT announced that the Dutch-led Coalition force CTF-150 is supporting the ROYG's efforts to recapture 23 Al Qa'ida operatives who escaped from a Yemeni prison on February 5. On February 11, Qassimi convened a meeting with Chief OMC, NAVCENT LNO, and Yemeni officials to coordinate efforts to block possible maritime escape routes. Also in attendance were BG Ali Ahmed Siayani, Director Military Intelligence (DMI), BG Ali Rassa, YCG Commander, Col Ali Supe, YCG Chief of Operations, and YCG and YNAV operations officers.

3. (C) MG Qassimi thanked CTF-150 for supporting the ROYG's efforts to capture the Al-Qa'ida suspects. He then delineated the areas of responsibility between the various forces:

A) Land: The Yemeni Army and security forces (not further identified) are responsible for patrols and intelligence assets working to apprehend the escapees on land.

B) Territorial Sea and Ports: YCG is responsible within the 12 nautical mile territorial limit, while YNAV and YCG are jointly-responsible for covering ports and coastal areas. YNAV is also tasked with positioning radar to provide coverage of areas not covered by patrol craft or other surveillance.

C) International Waters: CTF-150 is responsible for its own mission in international waters, within its normal operating area in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea.

4. (U) MG Qassimi also designated the YCG Aden-based operations center to serve as the communications hub between Yemeni forces and CTF-150.

Big Sea, Little Ship: Focusing Efforts

5. (C) Chief OMC explained that CTF-150 had limited assets and efforts would, therefore, be better served if Yemen could provide information on where internal assets provided the least coverage. CTF-150 could then focus their efforts south of these areas in international waters.

6. (C) Qassimi also requested CTF-150's assistance stopping all ships departing from Somalia carrying refugees, saying these ships present a direct threat to Yemen because smugglers could be carrying drugs, weapons, and/or terrorists. Chief OMC and NAVCENT LNO quickly explained that CTF-150 was operating in international waters, and the focus of their mission would be on southern bound ships from Yemen in order to block possible maritime escape routes or capture suspected terrorists.

Who,s Job is it Anyway?

7. (C) MG Qassimi asked YCG and military officials on their current ability to provide coverage. Unable to answer immediately, the Yemeni officials began discussing their

individual service's capabilities in smaller groups. When Qassimi called the meeting back to order, DMI and Army officials requested that the YCG expand its operations beyond port areas. YCG officials replied that limited equipment (small boats) and bases (only in Aden, Hodeida and al-Salif) restricted them from expanding operations to a larger area. Qassimi asked YNAV and YCG to create a joint-plan specifying which areas Yemeni forces could realistically cover. Qassimi also invited the NAVCENT LNO to participate in the planning session and assist in coordinating communication between Yemeni forces and CTF-150.

Comment

19. (C) This "coordination" meeting highlights the poor level of planning for joint-operations between Yemen's military services and the lack of understanding of each other's capabilities. CTF-150's offer of assistance clearly encouraged the coordination of Yemen's maritime response, a process which had not already begun.

10. (C) Coordination between military and coast guard forces, which fall under the Interior Ministry, has generally been weak to non-existent. YNAV, an ineffectual force with inoperable equipment, resents the upstart Coast Guard, which has steadily grown into a capable and professional force after being established in 2002 with USG assistance.

11. (C) This current crisis could provide an excellent opportunity for a break from tradition, resulting in the first major YCG and YNAV coordinated mission. While its unlikely that the combined efforts of Yemeni and Coalition forces can succeed in providing full coverage for Yemen's long and porous sea borders, the presence of maritime forces makes the maritime escape route less attractive. Also, the establishment of joint-communications procedures should pave the way for future cooperation between Yemeni and Coalition forces in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.
Krajeski